



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
PAT QUINN

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Governor Quinn Announces Illinois Awarded \$17.6 Million for Early Learning Race to the Top

Key Federal Grant to Boost State-Funded Early Education Programs

CHICAGO — Governor Pat Quinn today announced that Illinois is one of six states to receive a supplemental award from the 2013 Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge grant fund to improve early learning programs across the state. The award of \$17.6 million is in addition to the \$34 million the state won through the competitive, federal Race to the Top program last year to help the state's youngest learners. Today's announcement is part of Governor Quinn's agenda to give every child the opportunity for a high quality education.

"We need to provide a strong foundation for academic success at an early age," Governor Quinn said. "This federal funding will greatly aid in our efforts. An early start on learning and a high-quality education will prepare our students for life."

"These funds will help us to further develop a solid infrastructure for early childhood education in Illinois so children can enter kindergarten prepared to succeed from the very start," State Superintendent of Education Christopher A. Koch said. "Study after study shows how essential early learning opportunities are to improving achievement in K-12 and beyond."

The Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development will use the funds to strengthen the state's early learning infrastructure for children, birth to age five, with a focus on children from low-income families. The plans include work to:

- Create a new Quality Rating and Improvement System, ExceleRate Illinois, that will inform parents about program quality and guide program improvement efforts;
- Strengthen training and support for early learning personnel; and
- Align all early care and education programs – including Child Care, Head Start and Preschool for All – with high-quality early learning and development standards.

"It's critical we reach children earlier," State Board of Education Chairman Gery J. Chico said. "A child ready to learn in kindergarten will be a child who is ready to learn for years to come."

The Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development worked closely with the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS), the Illinois Department of Child and Family Services (IDCFS), the Illinois Early Learning Council and other public and private partners to prepare the state's Early Learning Challenge plan.

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Governor Quinn has made early childhood education a top priority. In addition to the Race to Top-Early Learning Challenge funds, the Governor worked with the General Assembly to implement the first-in-the-nation Early Childhood Construction Grant program. This \$50 million program is building and renovating early learning centers in high need communities across the state.

In fiscal year 2011, the federal grant competition received 37 applications. Fourteen states have been awarded funds. For more information about the Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge Fund, visit <http://www2.illinois.gov/gov/OECD/Pages/EarlyLearningChallenge.aspx>.

The U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services also announced that California, Colorado, New Mexico, Oregon and Wisconsin will receive a supplemental award from the 2013 Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge grant fund.

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